

Tourism Committee
Connecticut Commission on Culture & Tourism
One Constitution Plaza, 2nd Flr.
Hartford, Connecticut
September 9, 2008
12:30 P.M.

DRAFT PENDING APPROVAL

Present Arthur Diedrick, Chairman; Terry Bickhardt, Carolyn Cicchetti, Anne Elvgren, Larry McHugh, Michael Price, and Rita Schmidt

Staff: Rena Calcaterra, Barbara Cieplak, Leigh Johnson (recording), and Karen Senich

Guests: Paul Mayer, Marje Medzela, Janet Serra, and Donna Simpson

I. Call to Order

Arthur Diedrick called the meeting to order at approximately 12:35 p.m.

II. Approval of the May 13, 2008 Minutes

The minutes of May 13, 2008 were not available for action. Minutes for May 13, 2008 were tabled for future action.

III. Executive Director's Report – Karen Senich Reporting

Reduction in the State's Budget

The Governor's office imposed a 5% reduction to the agency's budget which impacted all programs including the tourism districts budgets. The Governor's office released a press release yesterday indicating there will be more cuts to the state's budget. It was Ms. Senich's understanding that the Governor can only impose a one-time reduction to agencies budgets without legislative approval. It was the understanding from some committee members that the Governor could reduce agencies budgets more than once. Ms. Senich noted she would get confirmation from OPM and report back to the committee.

Regional Tourism Districts

As indicated earlier, the regions received a 5% cut to their budgets. Regional tourism districts resubmitted their revised budgets which included the 5% reduction. The districts' budgets were reviewed and all budgets were under the 20% administrative cap. The committee might want to consider for discussion today or at a future meeting – revisiting the administrative cap initially established by this committee. The statute mandates a 20% administrative cap, but the definition of what is included in the cap is regulated by the agency. You cannot modify the 20% administrative cap, but you can modify what is included in the

cap.

Staffing Issues

Director of Tourism

There were 23 applicants who applied and passed the examination. Out of the 23 applicants, six (6) applications were reviewed, and four (4) applicants were invited for an interview. Interviews were conducted and an offer will be made to the selected candidate within the next few weeks.

Vacant Positions

When the hiring freeze is lifted, it is anticipated that the agency will fill all five (5) of the vacant positions in the tourism division.

Upcoming Legislative Session

The agency does not have any official legislative initiatives for this year. It was noted, this year's legislative session will be difficult due to the state's fiscal crisis. The Executive Director's only hope for the next legislative session is that the agency's future existence remains intact fiscally and programmatically.

Sports Advisory Board

The new Sports Advisory Board met two (2) weeks ago. Jim Abromaitis is the Chair and Larry McHugh is the Vice Chair. The function of the Board is to advise the executive director of Commission on how to attract and market sporting events and venues within the State. The executive director is mandated to submit a report to the legislature 45 days before each legislative session on the Board's recommendations, findings, and activities.

The first recommendation of the Board was to place sports venues and sporting events on the CTvisit.com website. The composition of the Board includes a wide range of representation from private and public entities, and colleges and universities. The Board is statutorily mandated to convene their first meeting before November 1, 2008, and no less than one meeting per quarter thereafter.

Big E

The Big-E starts this weekend. Connecticut Day is September 17, 2008. The agency will be sharing some of its booth space for the Governor's One Thing Campaign.

Tourism Gallery Exhibit

On October 16th – December 5th tourism will be hosting its first Tourism Gallery event ***Tourism Connecticut***. A call for artists was released for their view of Connecticut or their favorite parts of Connecticut. An Opening Reception is being planned for the event.

IV. ***Marketing Director's Updates***

Staycation Campaign

CCT teamed with the Governor's office on the Staycation campaign. Between early June – July 3rd, the campaign was pulled together. The goal for the campaign:

- increase business,
- boost hotel occupancy,
- increase attraction attendance during a lagging economic situation, and
- help Connecticut residents with their leisure time activities here within the state.

Over 400 properties and participants participated in the program, offering discounted admissions or complimentary gifts. Campaign included radio advertising with the Governor throughout the state on 26 radio stations, printed materials to properties and promotional partners, payroll stuffers, posters, and door stickers. Kick-off for the campaign was in partnership with the Connecticut River Valley and their Airstream in Wickham Park in East Hartford.

Press Event

The agency hosted a press event "Closer Thank You Think" in New York City in June – at the Modern Restaurant in the Museum of Modern Art with 21 press representatives and five tourism regions attending.

International Direct Sales

Over the summer the regions and staff developed new itineraries to promote Connecticut to the international market. The regions and CCT have committed to a marketing co-op for nine (9) Discover New England international sales events. CCT is producing new advertisements for the markets.

Contract Updates

The agency has extended the purchase order for Pita Communications for one year to handle advertising, creative development, and media buying. Kathleen Stevens is new with Pita, and will be handling the public relations for the agency through November. One-year purchase orders were initiated for Inside Out for online marketing services and M. Silver for national public relations.

The division worked with DOIT to initiate a RFP for webhosting, design and development which was completed over the summer. DOIT now has an approved vendor list for CCT to select from.

ESTO

Approximately 450 destination marketing representatives attended ESTO this year including a representative from CCT. Connecticut is keeping up with other states with similar budgets. New media and social networking is the way of the future (My Space, Face Book, U Tube, and blogs.) State tourism offices around the country are printing less and are not printing information that is available on their websites.

V. *New FY 2009 Marketing Grants*

Workshops focusing on challenge and co-op marketing grants and all grants offered by the Commission are scheduled around the state and will begin next week through October.

Co-Op Marketing grants subsidize specific projects and there are four (4) projects for this year,

- billboard co-op which is being extended into the fall,
- advertising for new properties through Madden PrePrint for the Free Standing Insert (FSI) summer and fall editions,
- market research intercept vision syndicated study, and
- strategic marketing planning.

VI. *New CONNECTicut Fall 2008 Campaign*

The fall campaign kicked off two weeks ago with advertisements in Better Homes & Garden, Ladies Home Journal, and Oprah. Advertising in the New York Times – *Friday Escapes* will focus on special packages for couples or families traveling. The online marketing will begin next week featuring Sweepstakes.

Free Standing Inserts (FSI) will be placed in papers that will reach ½ million subscribers in CT and the New York area. This is a co-op advertising effort with the regions promoting suggested fall foliage driving tours.

VII. *Change of Meeting Time*

A recommendation was made to change the starting time of the committee from 12:30 p.m. to 11:00 a.m. commencing with the next scheduled meeting. All were in favor.

A recommendation was made that updates (with the exception of the Executive Director's report) be summarized in a report and be sent along with the meeting materials to committee members prior to each meeting. All were in favor.

VIII. *Public Comment*

None at this time.

IX. *Adjournment*

The meeting was adjourned.

The next meeting of the Tourism Committee is scheduled for November 4, 2008 at 11:00 a.m. at the Connecticut Development Authority.

Tabled Items

- May 13, 2008 meeting minutes.